

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes April 7, 2009

The Edgefield County Council held its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 P. M. Tuesday, April 7, 2009, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter St., Edgefield.

Members present

C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman
Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman
Rodney Ashcraft, Councilman
Genia Blackwell, Councilwoman
Norman Dorn, Councilman

Others present

John Pettigrew, Jr., County Administrator
John F. Byrd, Jr., County Attorney
Lynn Strom, Finance Manager
Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council
and others as per list attached

Chairman Kneece called the meeting to order and Rev. Garrett gave the invocation, after which the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell, to approve the April 7, 2009 Council Agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

Motion was made by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman Bright, to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2009, Edgefield County Council Meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports

No comments. Motion was made by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman Ashcraft to accept the reports. Motion carried unanimously.

Ordinances

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilman Dorn, to approve first reading of Ordinance No. 08-09-605, "An Ordinance Providing for the FY 2009-2010 Edgefield County General Operating Budget." Motion carried with Councilman Ashcraft and Councilwoman Blackwell opposing.

Prior to a motion being made by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman Bright, to approve the first reading of Ordinance No. 08-09-606, "An Ordinance to

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Amend Edgefield County Ordinance No. 04-05-558 to Increase the Ten-Dollar Per Vehicle Road Maintenance Fee on all Motorized Vehicles Registered in Edgefield County to Twenty Dollars Effective July 1, 2009”, Councilman Dorn greatly opposed the increase of ten dollars. Chairman Kneese asked the administrator to please clarify this increase.

Mr. Pettigrew stated that by increasing the road maintenance fee to twenty dollars it will closely match the cost of operating the roads and bridges department. The county has over 200 miles of roads, some paved and some dirt and we also have a number of bridges that we maintain. In order to do this, we have eight employees and by increasing it to twenty dollars this will come very close to matching the cost of operating that department. In checking with other counties the road maintenance fee varies. Some counties have no fee and some are as high as thirty and thirty five dollars.

Mr. Bob Ramsey asked to speak on this ordinance (08-09-606). Mr. Ramsey apparently did not feel comfortable with this increase and had many questions, one being the difference in this year’s budget (2008-09) and 2009-10. \$507,056 (2008-09) and \$449,000 for 2009-10. He could not understand coming up with the \$449,000.

Mr. Pettigrew explained that they took the number of vehicles registered this year (all motorized vehicles) and doubled it because we are doubling the fee and it worked out to the amount that is required to cover the road maintenance. Should it bring in additional money (don’t believe it will) that money can stay in that fund to be used for road maintenance in a future year. If it does not bring in enough, then we would run a deficit and have to make up the money in the following year. The \$58,000 cut comes from an employee in that department that was unable to return to work and at the January meeting council voted to eliminate that position.

Motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance No. 08-09-606 was made by Councilman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman Bright. Councilmen Dorn and Ashcraft and Councilwoman Blackwell voted nay. Motion to approve first reading failed to pass.

Resolutions

No resolutions.

New Business

Employee performance evaluations

Councilwoman Blackwell asked for employee performance evaluations to be placed on the agenda. She explained how each evaluation should be done and by whom. Councilman Dorn spoke against evaluations and felt that we have enough problems without adding to find out if someone is doing a good job or not – that the department

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heads have enough work to do as is. Councilman Ashcraft spoke in favor of the evaluations. You evaluate to be sure that the junior member, supervisor and the person (s) above you has been doing their job correctly. Those deserving to keep their job will definitely be reflected on the paper work.

Councilwoman Blackwell's input was that using performance evaluations would help with accountability and help employees develop and grow in their positions. Without this feedback how could a department head possibly know how an employee is performing and to develop in that position.

Motion was made by Councilman Ashcraft, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell to approve using the employee performance evaluations. Motion carried with Councilmen Dorn and Bright opposing. Before the final vote the chairman stated that he understood Councilwoman Blackwell would implement this program herself at no expense to the county.

Census

Ms. Doris Jones, Partnership Specialist with the US Census Bureau. Ms. Jones assists individuals working with the Census in Edgefield County. She explained the importance of a census being taken which helps to determine political representation and also determines the federal dollars which come down to the local government. Every person not counted means less money coming into the county.

Other than explaining the importance of the census, Ms. Jones would like council to have a complete county committee established. This would be established by the council in selecting "movers and shakers" in Edgefield County sending messages to Edgefield County citizens that the census is coming and that it is safe and confidential. South Carolina was 49th in the nation for mail-back response rate in 2000 which they hope to improve for 2010.

Edgefield County Welcome Center (Tompkins Library)

Carol Bryan, a volunteer of the Welcome Center addressed council on the funding that council is anticipating removing from the Edgefield FY 2009-2010 General Operating budget. She stated that she feels there is a lot of confusion about the building "behind the yellow brick wall" across the street. That building (two buildings) are owned by the Civic League – a non-profit agency formed in the 1920's – now known as the Tompkins Library Building. It was used as the town library until the library system became a regional library system and the library moved out to its present location.

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Mrs. Nancy Mims, the Librarian, was retiring and saw the need for a Courtesy center in the town. This came about because of so many visitors from out of town seeking their roots. At that time, the county funded the director for what became the official Welcome Center for the town and county.

At the same time the Edgefield County Genealogical Society was chartered through the state and started acquiring masses of records. Those records now pull in no less than 2000 visitors a year. We do have some locals. The money the county contributes goes for the director's salary. The buildings are kept up by the Civic League and the Genealogical Society apart from county funds. County funds do not go into the building.

Bids / Lights & Cross Arms / EC Recreation Park

Two bids were received for the purchase of lights and cross arms for two baseball fields at the Edgefield County Recreation Park.

Newberry Supply & Equipment	\$28,424
Mayer Electric Supply	\$50,332

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilman Ashcraft, to approve the bid of \$28,424 submitted by Newberry Supply & Equipment for the purchase of lights and cross arms for the Edgefield County Recreation Park. Motion carried unanimously. No labor costs.

Rev. Melvin Gordon

(The chairman recognized Rev. Gordon to speak at this time.)

Mr. Gordon spoke concerning Northside Park. "Nothing has been done significantly since the park was begun about eight or nine years ago. We have tried to get grants. We have a walking trail and a softball field – bleachers have to be borrowed from Bettis. We rely on you all to handle the money to be fair with all of us. The only reason I am here is that I am the leading officer for those churches that gave you the land to put that park up and we try to keep activity on that park so you will stay interested and do something about it. You have this kind of money and every time we say something about money and you guys have been to us and met with us and told us how bad things are but it can't be too bad. We just need to understand what is going to happen up there. Our board gave you a wish list and you all have met a few of those things. The facility is really worthless to anybody in the neighborhood without water and power."

Administrator: "As Rev. Gordon mentioned it did not pass a perk test. We have had the folks from Greenwood (DHEC) and we appealed it and someone from Columbia came to try to get it to perk and the land just will not perk. Mr. Wates, our recreation director, has looked into the possibility of a free standing restroom like you see at a state park that does not require plumbing—works somewhat like a portable."

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Rev. Gordon: “Meanwhile, if you guys can generate this kind of funding for one park, I feel very sure you can generate some funds for that park up there. I leave it in your hands to take some action and see what you can do with that park so that we can get it up to a better speed because right now it has just been sitting there.”

Councilman Ashcraft: “Actually right now we can’t generate that, we can’t provide benefits for the county employees like we wish we could. As far as I am concerned we are delinquent on county operations and paying and taking care of county employees is a number one and so right now we can’t but I am sure when the economy gets better I am interested in it and I hope you will come back.”

GLEAMNS appointment

Motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Mary Hardy to the GLEAMNS Board of Commissioners was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell. Motion carried unanimously. This appointment was requested of council after GLEAMNS held a public meeting on February 9th and Ms. Hardy was nominated to serve a year on the board representing the “poor sector” of Edgefield County.

Councilman Ashcraft asked to bring an item to the floor concerning the re-appointment last month of Rev. J. R. Hooper to the Tax Board of Appeals.

“With the appointment to the Tax Appeals Board of Mr. Hooper that we voted on there is some news that came to me kind of late and I was not aware of it. Regarding the sad news I really would recommend that his membership to that board be suspended until all charges on that are clear. With that, I would like to, maybe Mr. Dorn could appoint somebody else so I guess I would like to make a motion that we appoint someone else to that until his charges have been”.....

Councilman Dorn: My only answer to that, I don’t think we are judge and jury to determine who is guilty and who is not guilty. I think that is a job of the courts. When you got folks getting information under the cover, around the cover, between the cover – that is not our job to determine whether a person is guilty or not. I think, I am not a lawyer, you got to be a little careful when you start maybe accusing or insinuating that folks have done something that may or may not have done it. Far as I am concerned that is the job of a judge or that is the job of a jury. I don’t think anybody on this council is either one of the two that I just mentioned.

Ashcraft: I think if the charges are true (Dorn) “if”, Ashcraft: exactly, I would be making the move to excuse him but right now while those charges are pending I would really prefer to suspend his activity on that board from a county organization, government organization, you know, until the charges are cleared.

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Dorn: I don't believe we have the power to do that.

Ashcraft: I think we do. He serves us. We can hire/fire anyone on that board, I believe.

Chairman Kneece: Let me make a suggestion. Chairman to the administrator. Isn't it a rule/regulation of employees that we can remove them at anytime?

Administrator: The appointees serve at the pleasure of the council. If council wishes to remove an appointee they can and they can fill the position with someone else. It would take a motion and a majority vote of council to accomplish that.

Ashcraft: I make the motion to temporarily remove him until all charges are excused and if the charges turn out to be true as judged by someone else other than myself, then, I would move that he is dismissed.

Dorn: Mr. Pettigrew, how do you describe the definition of an employee – what is the wording for that?

Administrator: This is an appointee that I was referring to and this suspension I will defer to our legal counsel if he knows whether we can suspend someone but I know we can remove the person.

Attorney Byrd: I agree with Mr. Pettigrew (Administrator). It is the discretion of council you can suspend such person at the time - all in the hands of the council.

Ashcraft: I am just one vote though.

Chairman Kneece: I have a motion to remove him (Mr. Hooper) temporarily – is that what your words were?

Ashcraft: I make the motion to remove Mr. Hooper from the Tax Appeals Board temporarily until all charges have been dismissed.

Kneece: Do I have a second to the motion?

Blackwell: I second the motion.

Kneece: A motion and a second. All in favor. (Motion passed with 3 yeas)
(Opposing: Councilman Dorn and Councilman Bright.)

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Old Business

Tax Board of Appeals appointment.

One vacancy remains on the Tax Board of Appeals (at-large seat). No council member submitted a name.

Administrator's Report.

The Marine Corp training (discussed at November meeting) began last week and will go through April 12th. I have not heard of any problems as a result of the training. Once they leave on April 12th, they will not return until January 2010. At that time they will be coming about every ninety (90) days for training in Edgefield County and also in McCormick and Saluda counties.

Mr. Pettigrew reminded everyone of the Alliance meeting on May 4th, 7:30 a.m., Piedmont Tech. George Thornton, the CEO with the National Wild Turkey Federation will speak.

Recreation program is in full swing. We have about 480 young people participating in the sports of baseball, girls' softball, and soccer.

Next budget work session is April 21st. At this time, without passing the road maintenance fee we are \$224,000 out of balance on the road maintenance account. We will have to decide what we want to do at the work session; if we want to cut positions or put on about a three mill tax increase to offset that road maintenance fee.

Guests

Bob Ramsey, Rev. Melvin Gordon, and Raymond Timmerman signed to speak but declined.

Greg Henderson, County Agent with Clemson University. We do ask that you keep us in mind favorably, we are ever mindful of a roof over our head. The most critical issue that is coming forward that has been discussed is the position that the county is in, in regards to the Title Three funding. These are funds that come through the US Forest Service to the state and then to the county as requested. We do have one agent, our Natural Resource Agent, who is funded partially with those funds. They do fall somewhat short of funding his entire employment package. There is a ticking clock on those funds and the balance that we have right now with the obligations currently from council not counting what may happen with the new fiscal year requests. His employment will end November 15th, along with the programs he has built here in youth education. We are trying to resolve how those Title Three funds can be utilized. We appreciate the support you have given us in the past and we will be looking forward to the next budget work session.

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Executive Session

A motion was made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by Councilman Bright, to go in to executive session pursuant to Code Section 30-4-70 (a) (1) and (2) of the SC Code of Laws 1976, as amended, concerning (1) a possible property acquisition and (2) a personnel matter, returning to regular session at the discretion of the Chairman. Motion carried unanimously.

Returning to regular session the chairman announced that council would not pursue any further the Calliham property. Also, council accepted the resignation of our County Attorney, John Byrd, effective at the end of this fiscal year.

The administrator announced that Lynn Strom, Finance Director, will be on maternity leave (due date May 13th). Mrs. Margaret Harling will be filling in for Lynn during her absence. Mrs. Harling was the Finance Director prior to Lynn being hired due to Mrs. Harling's retirement. She will be working three days a week.

Mayor Durham: "Is the Calliham building a dead issue. Any way we could negotiate? The chairman stated about as dead as it could be. They did not come up with any better proposal than they already had – we asked for the best proposal. Since council will no longer pursue the Calliham property there is only one option left. On April 21 council will hold a work session/called meeting and the other option will be discussed at that time.

Claims approved as follows:

A. **PAYROLL: 2/23/09 thru 3/8/09**

Regular.....\$229,800.44

PAYROLL: 3/9/09 thru 3/22/09

Regular.....\$226,266.39

B. **General Operating.....\$747,343.89.**

There being no further business, Councilman Dorn made the motion to adjourn. A budget work session is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21st at 6:00 P. M. and the next regular council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5th, both to be held in the council chambers.

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
April 7, 2009
6:00 P. M.

C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman

Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman

Rodney Ashcraft, Councilman

Regenia Blackwell, Councilwoman

Norman Dorn, Councilman

ATTEST

Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council

